

Design media room for best sound

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There are lots of decisions to make when planning a media room, but the two most important relate to sound. Whether you're more likely to listen to Bach or Bon Jovi, you must design the room so your equipment produces the best possible sound. Just as important is how you plan to keep the sound from travelling to other parts of the house and bothering those who may not share your musical tastes.

Combining electronic equipment with good interior design and noise control is a real juggling act for most homeowners. That's why Michael Rosenberg started Sounddecision, a Toronto firm that provides media room consulting, design and installation services. Recently Rosenberg was asked to design a media room in a luxury condominium unit as part of a renovation project. It presented the challenge of creating a great sounding system that didn't disturb the neighbours above, below or beside the unit.

Rosenberg was able to achieve his soundproofing goals by using Fiberglas Pink Insulation products. The floor was raised by four inches, and Fiberglas Pink Noise Stop Blanket was installed under the new plywood floor. Fiberglas Pink batts were also used around the speakers in the custom-built wall cabinet.

Builders and renovators concerned with noise control strive to achieve a high STC (sound transmission class) to keep noise from travelling from one room to the next. Many use Fiberglas Noise Stop Blanket and Noise Stop Board as

standard components in party walls and ceilings when building multi-family dwellings. The products, properly installed, provide a significant increase in the STC.

Working with his clients and Toronto interior designer David Margulis, Rosenberg created a wall unit that looks terrific but also has several hidden features. The speakers, for instance, are installed in the cabinet. They sit on concealed spikes and are wrapped in Fiberglas Pink insulation to prevent sound transmission.

"If you have a speaker that's sitting on the floor, you'll notice the bass sounds travel through the floor," says Rosenberg. The spikes and insulation eliminate this problem but don't influence the sound coming from the speaker. The cabinet also has a section that slides away to allow convenient access to the back of the equipment, in case adjustments are necessary. And, it has lots of storage and bookshelf space.

The media room serves as the nerve centre for a sound system that extends to the entire condominium unit. Each room has built-in ceiling speakers, and each room has individual volume controls. Rosenberg says the wiring system is similar to electrical wiring, and should be installed at the same time as the electrical wiring when renovations are taking place.

This client wanted a complete electronics package, consisting of a television set, a hi-fi VHS video

cassette recorder, a receiver with a signal processor, a dubbing cassette tape deck, and a compact disc player. This particular set of electronic equipment cost about \$6,000; installation of the wiring for the entire unit cost about \$1,500 and the cabinet cost about \$4,000.

Lighting in a media room is important, too, for optimum television viewing. The condominium unit features quartz lighting, which casts a pure color-correct light. Fluorescent lighting casts a blue or orange color.

Comfortable seating, two glass-

topped side tables and some contemporary accessories provide the finishing touches.

Stereo speakers should be placed at least three inches above the floor, and at least 10 inches from any side wall—the worst place to put speakers is in the corners of the room.

For more information and free booklets "A Guide To Insulation For Noise Control" and "The Energy Efficient Home" write to the: Fiberglas Information Centre, 80 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2V1.

Homer Formby offers paint removal hints

Your latest trip to the flea market turned up a perfect oak dining room table. But there's one small hitch: The beautiful wood is hidden under an awful coat of avocado green paint.

If your first thought is to by-pass the table, think again. Removing the paint from furniture (or "stripping") can be easier than you think, if you know a few professional secrets.

Homer Formby, a well-known authority on wood care and refinishing, offers these hints for paint removal projects.

- The moderate temperatures of fall are ideal for paint removal projects. Paint removers work best when the temperature is between 65 degrees and 85 degrees F. Higher or lower temperatures interfere with the action of the chemicals in the remover.

- Be certain you work in a well-ventilated area, with a constant supply of fresh air. Formby recommends working outdoors if possible. Be certain to wear heavy rubber gloves, purchased at the hardware store.

(Rubber gloves made for dishwashing aren't meant for this job.)

- Don't use a "painting" stroke to apply a paint remover. You'll fan the gases that do the work into the air, cutting down on the effectiveness of the product. Instead, apply paint remover by dragging a filled paintbrush across the wood about four inches. Stop, refill the brush, and make another four inch stroke. Once you've applied a layer of paint remover, don't touch it until all the bubbling action stops.

- If you're working on a piece that's heavily carved or has hard-to-reach areas, you may want to try an aerosol paint remover. Brush-on paint removers are best for most horizontal surfaces.

Formby adds that choosing the right product helps make the job easier. "Look for a heavy-bodied paint remover," he says.

"The can should be very heavy when you pick it up. Shake the can. It should sound like molasses, not like water in the can.

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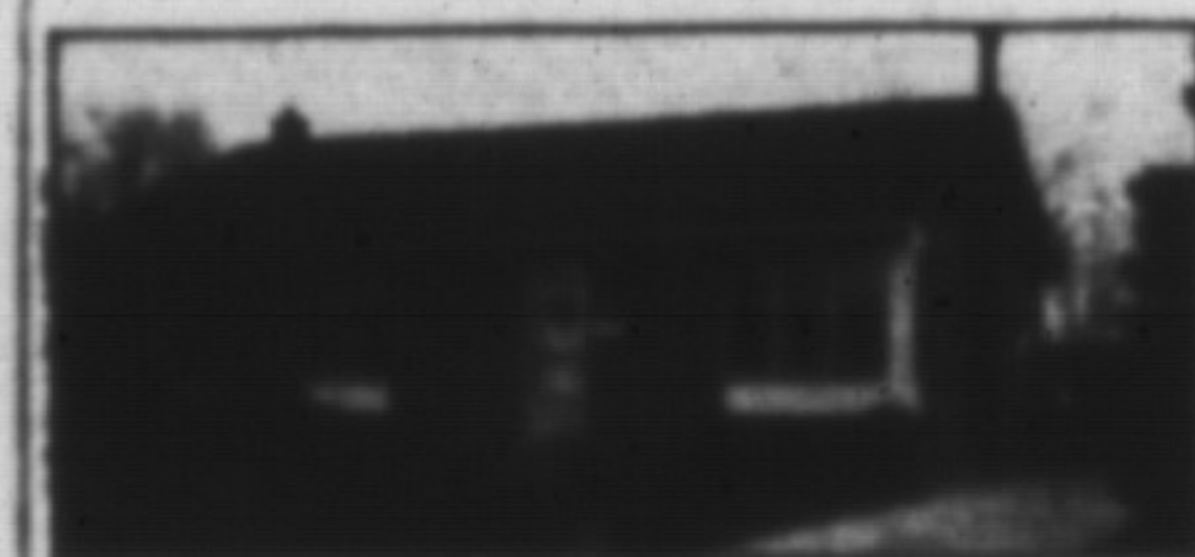
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